

News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

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DEMOCRATS TO BUSH: KEEP AMERICA SAFE- HEED SECURITY WARNINGS

Four Years After 9/11 Attacks, Security Loopholes Persist

Washington, D.C. – Representative Markey joined House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, Congressmen Robert Menendez, Bennie Thompson and first responders at a news conference today to call for close scrutiny of the U.S. disaster preparedness four years after the 9/11 attacks. Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior Democrat on the Homeland Security Committee made the following statement:

“Four years after 9/11, the United States is facing a tragic disaster in the South. The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina – the searches, the rescues, and the outpouring of volunteers and support from citizens across the country - take us back to the days following the 9/11 attacks.

“But as Americans across the country mobilize to help the victims, they are asking legitimate questions about how we could be this unprepared for a national disaster, four full years after 9/11. Americans want to know:

‘How could our government have been so unprepared for this natural disaster despite the many years of warnings we had been given?’

‘Would our government have been better prepared, if the hurricane had been a terrorist attack?’

We were warned many times that a major hurricane would one day hit New Orleans. The potential for devastation was identified by FEMA in 2001 as the third highest risk disaster the country might face.

We were warned that the levees in New Orleans were vulnerable and likely to break under the pressure from a hurricane.

We were warned that the flooding of New Orleans could cause thousands of deaths.

Yet, in the face of all these warnings, the Republican Congress chose to cut \$800 million in FEMA preparedness grants.

The Bush Administration’s response to this terrible, predictable disaster is unacceptable. And if we are not careful, the lessons of Katrina will be shoved aside.

In addition to ignoring the warnings of disaster relief experts, the Bush Administration has neglected to respond to warnings about other terrorist attacks--

We have also been warned that terrorists want to exploit the fact that almost none of the cargo on passenger planes is screened.

We **must** move to 100% screening of all air cargo on passenger planes.

We have also been warned that attacks on shipments of extremely toxic materials traveling through our communities each day could cause hundreds of thousands of deaths.

We **must** re-route shipments of these materials around our densely populated cities and other sensitive areas where possible.

We have also been warned that terrorists are trying to take advantage of our lack of security at nuclear facilities, and obtain nuclear weapons capabilities.

We **must** immediately implement strong security requirements at domestic nuclear facilities and secure stockpiles of nuclear materials overseas.

We have also been warned that chemicals housed in communities in all 50 states present unnecessary terrorist targets across the country that could endanger the lives of millions of people.

We **must** force chemical companies to upgrade security at facilities and use less toxic substances where alternatives exist.

The Bush Administration and Congressional Republicans have demonstrated repeatedly that CUTTING CORNERS CAN KILL.

In New Orleans and Biloxi and other cities in the region we are seeing the horrific consequences of these cuts.

In the devastating aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the Bush Administration focused on the wrong type of “damage control.”

Instead of leading the effort to rescue, feed and shelter the residents of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and other affected areas, the Bush White House concentrated on “spin” and finger-pointing.

We can do better.

There is a fundamental difference in the way that the Democrats and Republicans approach the problem of securing our homeland.

We have fought to close the existing security risks posed by holes in our cargo, rail, nuclear, hazmat and chemical security. Our Republican colleagues, however, take their marching orders from these very same industries, which resist the implementation of urgently needed security upgrades.

As Democrats, we remember 9/11 and call on the Bush Administration and Congressional Republicans to HEED THE WARNINGS AND DO WHAT IT TAKES TO KEEP AMERICA SAFE.”

For more information on how to help the victims of Hurricane Katrina or to find out more about Rep. Markey’s work to close existing loopholes that persist in our air cargo, hazmat, chemical and nuclear security check out Representative Markey’s website at <http://www.house.gov/markey/>